



Buffalo Bill died in the second floor bedroom on left. Now a private residence, this home belonged to Cody's sister May Cody Decker

it laid in state from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Reports say that 12,000 to 25,000 people filed past the open casket to pay their respects. The body was then taken on a horse-drawn caisson to the Elk's Lodge at 14th & California Street for the funeral service. The capital building still exists but the Elk's Club has been demolished for a parking lot and convention center.

After 5 p.m. on January 14, the bronze casket that held Cody's body was taken from the Elk's Club to Olinger's Mortuary and placed in the second crypt from the floor directly right of the crypt room door located in the basement of the mortuary. Supposedly, there it sat until the June 3 burial.



Olinger Mortuary - the main entrance is on the left. Olinger is located less than a mile from May Cody Decker's house and was the mortuary of choice for leading residents of Denver at that time.

The Olinger Mortuary has changed ownership many times since 1917 but still carries the same name and the building that holds that crypt room is still standing, although not open to the public. Long time mortuary manager Bob Hansberry gave this author a tour in November 2002 and answered questions related to the challenges faced by an attempted body switch in 1917.

Challenge #1: Could the Cody trio have snuck into the mortuary?

According to Hansberry, the Olinger's slept upstairs above the mortuary in 1917 -- and owned a dog. The tour of the mortuary revealed that the crypt room itself had a lockable door, however this could have been added during the ensuing 85 years. In addition, the entrance door to the mortuary building was lockable. The crypt itself employed rollers to easily move the heavy bronze casket in and out but one would think they might make noise when used. Since the crypt room was no longer in use, the author had no way of testing with an actual casket.



This original staircase greets you upon entering the mortuary. The stairs to the basement crypt room are out of frame to the right.

Challenge #2: Could they have switched bodies?

The conspiring Cody undertaker comes heavily into play here. Not only would the bodies have to be switched, the business suit Cody wore in burial would have to be switched. Since it seems unlikely there would be a perfect fit, adjustments would have to be made. Facial expressions must match. Cody's toupee must match. His beard and moustache must match. It seems a tall order but then this trio of body snatchers included a professional mortician to handle these details.